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First of all, I want to commend the American Farm Bureau Federation for its forceful and effective support for improved farm legislation in the Congress last year.

The Food and Agriculture Act of 1977 sets out some positive new directions for U.S. farm programs. Your active support, in many ways, made that possible.

Those long months of legislative activity generated some controversy. In some parts of the country, the controversy remains.

The most dramatic opposition has come from those farmers who are calling for a national strike.

#### The Farm Strike

This Administration has made its position repeatedly clear regarding the current efforts of some farmers to strike for full 100 percent of parity.

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Remarks prepared for delivery by Secretary of Agriculture Bob Bergland, before the American Farm Bureau Federation, Houston, Texas, January 9, 1978, 8:00 p.m., CST

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We deeply sympathize with those farmers who are in deep trouble -- and there are many of them. We recognize their constitutional right to protest. They have, by their actions, been very successful in focusing public attention on their problems and the importance of farmers in our economy and society.

This Administration stands by its policy -- and I think you agree -- that it is not possible and not the role of the Federal government to guarantee all farmers a profit year after year.

Farmers, like any other businessman, are entitled to a fair return on their investment, their labor and their management skills.

While the nation, in its own self-interest, has a responsibility to keep agriculture productive and strong, the nation does not have the responsibility of assuming all the risks of farming and to guarantee full parity income.

However much we wish full parity prices, most farmers and farm organizations realize that full parity by government fiat would be a mistake. It would mean a government-established marketing system that would be an administrative and bureaucratic monstrosity. Farmers would lose all semblance of independence and be deprived of all decision-making.

Further, a government guaranteed full parity program not only would create an unconscionable burden on the taxpayers and thus be politically unacceptable to a vast majority of Americans -- such a program would drive already high farmland prices to astronomical heights and virtually eliminate farm family agriculture itself.

#### A National Food Policy

On basic and positive objectives, the Farm Bureau and the Administration are in agreement. And that is a plus for the whole nation.

I say this because a truly national food policy is long overdue. Both your organization and this Administration recognize this.

No longer can this nation afford to continue a policy of dividing the whole complex issue of food and fiber into isolated, separate problems.



We must deal with it as a total package.

Production -- farm prices -- marketing -- conservation -- agricultural research -- food reserves -- export policies -- energy -- and all the other components of our vast and complicated food and fiber system are inexorably interdependent. To deal with them as separate problems is to invite anarchy and a laundry list of contradictory policies.

### International Food Policy

Today -- as all of us now realize -- a national food policy must be global in scope.

The day was -- not too many years ago -- when the primary purpose of developing export markets, and the principal reason for establishing the P. L. 480 program, was to get rid of our grain surpluses.

That's no longer true.

Farm Bureau was among the first of the major farm and commodity organizations to recognize this. You have played an effective leadership role.

Not only are our foreign markets vital and necessary to the farmer -- they are as equally as important to the whole nation.

Our farm exports of \$24 billion last year makes agriculture the single largest domestic exporter in this country.

Without them, our deficit trade balance would be even more alarming. Our grain surpluses would be even more overwhelming. Our ability to import vast quantities of oil would be sharply curtailed or, at worst, our international monetary position would be a disaster.

Like it or not, our American food has become an indispensable component of our whole international policies. Used wisely, food exports can be not only a boom to the producer but can forge better international cooperation and understanding.

#### Developing Foreign Markets

With substantial Farm Bureau support over the years, USDA has developed the tools and the opportunities to build our foreign commercial markets and to meet our commitments to developing countries.



I am delighted that Farm Bureau and the Carter Administration see eye-to-eye on almost every aspect of our foreign agricultural trade policy.

We're doing a number of things which, I am sure, are worthy of your wholehearted support. For instance:

-- We insist that agriculture is the key to a successful outcome of the multilateral trade negotiations in Geneva. Without satisfactory progress in agricultural trade, I don't believe it likely that there will be any agreement at all.

-- We agree that a highly-protectionist policy would be severely damaging to our overall economy, but especially to American agriculture. We maintain a steadfast position against the adoption of self-defeating, restrictive trade measures.

-- We've concluded negotiations on an International Sugar Agreement that provides some protection for domestic sugar producers. And we're on the way to an International Wheat Agreement: not a price-rigging, market-sharing agreement, but one that will facilitate the flow of international trade at a decent price. That's our objective and I know it's yours.



-- We strongly support the USDA-cooperator program of foreign market development. And we intend to put more muscle behind it. It's an ideal partnership between government and private commodity groups.

-- This Administration has more than doubled the amount of CCC export sales financing for the current fiscal year, to \$1.7 billion.

-- And finally, the Farm Bureau and the Carter Administration stand side-by-side against any more embargoes, and more sales moratoriums unless we face a genuine national emergency.

I've heard it said that this Administration isn't committed to expanding our exports. Not true.

We've developed some exciting new initiatives, and we've beefed up our existing programs, to promote agricultural sales overseas.

For example, in the last year we exported more livestock and livestock products than we imported into the United States. That's a first.

And we've bargained hard with the Japanese to open their borders to more American beef, more American citrus products.

These are slow and steady gains. They're not the stuff of catchy headlines. But these are the things that get results. And that's what you want -- results, not shallow promises.

The Food and Agriculture Act of 1977 contains other positive provisions that will strengthen the price and income position of American farmers. Our domestic grain storage and reserve program is one of these.

### Grain Reserves

I am aware that there has been some disagreement whether or not this nation needs a domestic grain reserve program.

I believe most of the disagreement stems from the spectre of countless Government grain bins again dotting the prairies. That is a history that we do not want to repeat.

But to put the whole reserve and grain surplus issue in proper perspective, we have to consider three alternatives:

1. We could do nothing about the 2 billion bushels of carryover grain we have on hand. We can pretend it isn't there. We just forget it. That, obviously, is no solution.

2. We can put the Federal government back into the grain business as it was for nearly 30 years. Well, we've been down that path before. The government has no business becoming the primary market for producers. So, we can eliminate that possibility.

3. Finally, we can -- as we have done under the new food and farm bill -- set up a farmer-owned, farmer-controlled commodity reserve program.

This does three things -- quite well.

-- it relieves some of the surplus pressure on the market and strengthens prices.

-- it provides farmers with a badly needed economic cushion in this period of extremely tight credit.

-- and, most importantly, it provides producers with new marketing muscle and that is something that Farm Bureau has long advocated.

I believe the nation would rather see a farmer-owned grain bin on every farm than a dozen huge Government-owned grain bins in every township.



Some Political Realities

Another mistaken -- or at least -- distorted impression prevails among some people in this country that under this Administration the Department of Agriculture has become too consumer-oriented.

That's not the case. I yield to no one in my determination that the U. S. Department of Agriculture must speak for farmers -- work for farmers -- and that the problems and welfare of farmers are its first concern.

But, I submit that I am an apostle of political realities, and I think all farmers and all farm organizations must be these days.

Gone are the days, when your former great president, Ed O'Neal, built the most powerful single political bloc in history -- the so-called farm bloc.

Today, because of the revolutionary shift of population from rural to urban, farmer-representation in the Congress has dwindled to a small minority. In the House alone, urban Congressmen outnumber rural and farm Congressmen 400 to 35 -- and that's giving farmers some benefit of the doubt.

Reality demands that farmers and their organizations must learn how to count in Congress -- just as I learned after four terms there.

And what better way to spread and strengthen farmer-influence in the Congress than to make book with 200 million people who make up the farmers' sole domestic market -- the American consumers.

It's that simple -- and it's that tough.

There is a growing body of evidence that, for the first time in history, more of the general public has a better understanding and more sympathy for farmers' problems.

We saw proof of that in the support we got from them last year for the new food and farm bill.

A consumer-be-damned attitude is self-defeating and a shortsighted attitude for farmers.

After all, farmers do produce food and fiber to be consumed -- farm production is not just an entity in itself.

So what better political allies do we have than the consumers?

The nation has slowly come to realize that the total farm problem is not some vague, isolated issue that can be dealt with and solved out of the mainstream of other economic and political realities.

Food and its production -- its price and its economics -- are too important to the well-being and security of the whole nation to be treated irresponsibly.

#### USDA Consumer Policies and Regulations

I am aware of some controversy and resistance to a few of our recent regulatory proposals.

I can understand this resistance and objections.

But I assure you that when we do publish our proposals after considerable and thoughtful study, we do not maintain a rigid and inflexible posture. We do consider public comment and we are influenced by it.

All of which indicates that the Department, by submitting our proposals to full public comment, remains flexible to the public will and the best interests of everyone. This holds true for all our other proposals affecting consumers and farmers.



One of the facts of life we have to contend with is that regulations are now a permanent and unavoidable part of our society and economy.

We don't have to like them -- and few of us do.

And it is our right and our responsibility to protest over-regulation and unnecessary regulations. Sometimes it is necessary to raise enough Cain to eliminate nit-picking regulations and challenge those regulations that are scientifically and factually without base.

But I do not believe we need to poison the well to make the water pure.

We can, with reasonable objections and constructive suggestions, create a regulatory atmosphere that we can live with -- and that is what the public wants.

And that is the position I take in the Department of Agriculture.

The Carter Administration has succeeded in getting a handle on OSHA -- for example. OSHA has eliminated some 1100 ridiculous and unnecessary regulations. Perhaps even more should be eliminated. Time will tell.

EPA is another example.

We feel that by working closely with EPA, the USDA was able to release, last month, an entirely acceptable and workable policy on the use of pesticide and other farm chemicals.

We will continue to do so, because it is in agriculture's own best self-interest to formulate a pesticide policy that the farmers and the industry can live with and continue to produce abundantly and efficiently -- yet, be acceptable to the public.

The fact remains that people demand that our environment and our lives be protected.

At the same time, the regulatory agencies and the public must realize that we must have food and fiber to exist. A liveable balance must be found and in our pluralistic society that should be possible.

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